

*Time Allocation*

Thousands of Canadian scientists have objected to the cutbacks in our scientific research budgets. Even the chemist Polanyi, winner of the Nobel Prize, recommended to a science graduate not to look for a job in Canada since the budgets for scientific research were being cut. The Government should not try to suggest that it is the Opposition which is against scientific research in Canada. We are in favour of research. What we have difficulty in accepting is that Bill C-22, which the Government wants to ram down our throats, will promote research. We do not believe that it will, or at least we have no certainty that it will.

If pharmaceutical multinationals need additional funds to promote research, we do not think that the Government should try to get this money on the backs of the sick, the senior citizens and the poor in Canada so that the multinationals can finance so-called research activities about which we have no guarantees. There are no guarantees in this Bill that research activities will increase in Canada. There are no guarantees, even though the Government talks about additional jobs, that those jobs will be there. We have to rely on the word of the Minister, the very same Minister who is refusing to table in the House the material which would allow us to judge whether or not this Bill is useful or not.

Let us look at some historical background, Mr. Speaker. Before 1969, which is when the Liberal Party of Canada amended the Patent Act for drugs, there had been three in-depth studies dealing with the pharmaceutical industry. First, a study by a Committee of the House of Commons, second, a study by the Restrictive Trade Practices Commission, and finally, a Royal Commission which had examined the issue and presented a report. All three studies showed that drug prices were then too high in Canada and that the profits of the multinationals were already too high.

This is why the Act was amended in 1969 and the 17-year protection on new drugs was removed. This was done to provide more competition among drug manufacturers, to lower drug prices and to prevent them from increasing too quickly. It is indeed what happened, and in my humble opinion, this is what Bill C-22 could destroy. That would bring us back to the situation which existed before 1969.

In a few words I should like to defeat the argument whereby patent drug protection would boost research. It is quite clear that before 1969, when multinational drug companies were covered by 17-year patents, 3.5 per cent of total sales were earmarked for research. So what happened after 1969 when this patent protection was removed and generic drug manufacturers were then allowed to begin to copy drugs? Well, 3.9 per cent of total sales went for research. In other words, when the patent protection was dropped there was more research than before. The main argument of the Government in support of Bill C-22 does not hold water, it simply does not have currency.

I am wondering indeed why the Government would so readily swallow the pill offered by the multinationals, right along with the argument of companies which are making a handsome profit as it is and yet want even more.

I am asking myself this question and seeking the answer. Why would the Government try to shield the major drug manufacturers instead of defending the interests of Canadians who buy drugs, instead of protecting the elderly who are the prime drug users, instead of standing up for the sick who need them?

Would it be that the Government is buckling under pressure from the lobbyists of the multinationals? Would it be that Frank Moores and Mr. Doucet of Government Consultants International Inc. are making representations to the Government? Is it by way of subservience to the United States, perhaps because they have asked the Canadian Government for a concession in connection with the free trade negotiations?

We would like the Government to table the impact studies on the cost of pharmaceuticals that we have requested. By refusing to do so, the Government must be trying to hide something, because those studies show the cost of drugs will increase. Once those studies are made public, the Government will have to stop repeating that the cost of drugs will not increase. This is something we do not believe.

This is why we are opposing the legislation, and this is why we also oppose this dictatorial move to limit the length of debate in this House. We on this side strongly oppose that.

**Mrs. Gabrielle Bertrand (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs):** Mr. Speaker, I already rose once in this House to discuss this legislation, and I had no intention of doing so today, because I was in my office looking after the affairs of my constituency.

But while doing so I listened to the speeches for a few hours, and I was shocked and frustrated to see and hear what was being suggested today, not only to the House but to all those who are watching this debate on television.

The Opposition parties, both Liberal and NDP, have systematically been using delaying tactics, because as we know the debate on the Bill started on November 6 in this House, and even before that they wilfully delayed first reading, which is something absolutely unheard of.

This has been going on for a month. But it is my view that this Government is here to govern, to legislate, and that is exactly what we have decided to do. We are often told by our constituents: You have a majority, do something, what are you waiting for? Well, here we are now doing something, putting an end to wasting the time of the House, this wasting of hundreds of thousands of tax dollars every day, for what purpose? For getting people to panick, for scaring seniors, the sick and the needy.